

ETHICAL AND VALUES EDUCATION RE-ENGINEERING FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?



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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to provide empirical evidence on what needs to be done to re-engineer ethics and values education for sustainable national development at the basic education school level. Two research questions guided the study. Survey data were collected using a 19-item questionnaire from 525 teachers and analyzed using percentages and mean with standard deviation. The results showed that teachers were in agreement that ethics and values education can be re-engineered both from the home and school. It was recommended that the school system be overhauled to ensure that values education is well incorporated into the curriculum.

Keywords: *Ethics, values education, re-engineering, sustainable development.*

Background

Education is a fundamental right of every individual, and its importance cannot be overstated. It is not just about acquiring knowledge, but, includes the development of skills, fostering values, and building the capacity to contribute to society which are critical to sustainable development. Education promotes social cohesion, by making individuals more tolerant, accepting and respectful of diversity. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO; 2025), describe education as a means by which individuals acquire knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary to participate fully and effectively in society.

It is in realization of the importance of education that the World Education Forum held in Dakar in the Framework for Action re-affirmed the vision set out in the World Declaration on Education for All in Jomtien. Education for All expresses the international community's collective commitment to pursue a broad-based strategy for ensuring that the basic learning needs of every child, youth and adult are met and sustained starting from early childhood and extending throughout life.

The right to education imposes an obligation upon the government to ensure that all citizens have opportunities to meet their basic learning needs. In pursuant of this, one of the goals of education is the provision of equal access to qualitative educational opportunities for all citizens at all levels of education, within and outside the formal school system. Following this, the Federal Government of Nigeria in 2004 passed the Universal Basic Education Act which made education compulsory, universal and free for the first nine years of schooling. The nine years compulsory education known as basic education is made up of six years of primary education of which the first three years is referred to as lower basic education and the other three years as the middle basic education, and the last three years is the upper basic education also referred to as junior secondary education. Government also included one year of pre-primary schooling which however is not compulsory.

The objectives of primary education as the Federal Government of Nigeria (2013) enumerated in her National Policy on Education are to inculcate permanent literacy, numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively; lay a sound basis for scientific, critical and reflective thinking; promote patriotism, fairness, understanding and national unity; instill social, moral norms and values in the child; develop in the child the ability to adapt to the changing environment; and provide opportunities for the child to develop life manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capability.

In pursuance of these objectives, primary education shall be compulsory, free, universal and qualitative. The curriculum shall include subjects like religion and national values, civic education, cultural and creative arts among others. Teaching at this level shall be participatory, exploratory, experimental and child-centered and the medium of instruction shall be the language of immediate environment for the first three years. All these careful details show the importance placed on this level of education by the government, which might not be far fetched because research has shown the importance of the early years of a child in brain development. Research (UNESCO 2002) confirms the importance of the early years to positively influence children in long-lasting way.

Early years of the child's development sets the tone, it is critical for cognitive, social, emotional and physical development. The brain is rapidly developing, therefore the quality of experiences will contribute either to a weak or strong foundation for learning and behaviour. At this developmental stage, children are highly impressionable and they pick up everything from their parents, teachers, making a perfect time to instill good values. The perception of the child is quite clear and the education given at this age constitutes a step in the child's later life

(Kilinc&Andas 2022). Values education taught at this period (Kilinc&Andas (2022), Sakiman& Yasin (2023) state forms the basis of the child's behaviour as it helps in character building and learning the importance of value education and a gateway to national cohesion (Chidobi& Eze 2018). In the same vein, Pfeil, Underwood, Curko, Feiner, Pokorny, Sola, Arenas, Kragic&Strahonik (2017), also feel that this is the most substantive factor of development of autonomous, caring and resilient individuals, that can, later on, contribute to communities, both locally and globally, and would provide much more opportunities to prepare for future life. (Duban&Aydogdu 2016).

Value refers to standard, in this case of behaviour. Values are accepted principles for conduct (Stratton, 1973, Oluwagbohunmi, 2013) considered and accepted as ultimate goals of existence. They emanate from our culture and passed from one generation to the next as LongJohn (2023), affirm that protecting the values and transferring them from one generation to the next is very important for the quality of life. Values are concepts (Martins 2024), subject to hierarchy, which is why we give value, according to situation or circumstance in which we find ourselves. As values express abstract motivational goals, Oeschger, Makarova, Daniel &Doring (2024) suggest they are important to individuals in life as they play a crucial role in the cohesion of a society.

Values transmission occurs from the family, to the school. Important value development occurs during childhood, (Oeschger et. al 2024), with value socialization taking place in the environment the child encounters. Some authors (Nirupama & D'Souza (2021), and John-Nelson, Ihuwo&Ohanyiri (2025)) advised the inclusion of values education in the curriculum as it is often seen as an integral part of the educational system (LongJohn 2023, Martins 2024) and often included in curriculum in many countries, though Omenma and Onuoha (2021) saw little or no impact of the curriculum in changing children's practical value system. Values education has several impacts (Onyekpe&Ogbemudiare 2024) which include discipline, respect for elders, timeliness, cordiality and a strong aversion to immorality and its primary goal as emphasized by prospective teachers according to Sahin (2019) should be to raise good citizens.

Values education is important as it helps individuals to develop a strong sense of morality and ethical principles. (LongJohn 2023). Ethics is a reflective system of values, principles, virtues, and ideals that shape our lives and determine the basis for the relationships that we form with others as well as ourselves, which situates and orients us in the world (Pfeil et. al. 2017). As opined by Nirupama and D'Souza (2021) is a systematic approach to analyze, and distinguish what is right and wrong, good and bad, understand them as they relate to the well-being of the relationships. The relational and communitarian nature of ethics, Strahovnik (2016) say is extremely important and dictates reflections on justice, solidarity, compassion, and cooperation. Tyson (2019) suggests that ethics could have come into existence when human beings started to reflect on the best way to live.

Ethics plays an integral part in human social life (Mujrai 2021) as it serves as a code of conduct for our interactions with others. Ethical values comprise principles as honesty, integrity, respect and responsibility. Ethics as a set of spiritual and moral principles (Musek 2015) is seen as a moral compass

as it guides the thoughts and behaviour of a person, group, or society. As a guiding framework for relationships in all aspects of life it often equated with morality (Ristovski 2017) and plays a pivotal role in shaping the fabric of society.

Many nations (Schlenk, Kreb and Pfeil (2015), Sakin& Yasin 2023, Kader & Solomon 2024) are facing a multiplicity of ethical challenges and societal upheavals of different nature. Present day society is reeling from ethical wrong doing of crime and bad decisions. (Floyd, Xu, Atkins and Caldwell (2013), Ryan & Bisson 2011). Similarly, current realities in our nation indicate that ethics and values are eroding in the society as Omenma and Onuoha (2021) Eze (2024), state that Nigeria is currently experiencing value crisis and decay in the society, which Enu and Esu (2011) say has affected the standard of values and moral character formation.

Value transmission occurs from the family to the school. Important value development occurs during childhood (Oescger et.al) with value socialization taking place in the environment the child encounters. Oluwagbohunmi (2017) has shown that lack of value-based leadership, parents' failure to inculcate values in children at early stage and impunity as factors militating against youths' development of societal values. Also, there is a dissatisfaction with the way we have educated our youths (Thornberg& Og 2013), coupled with modernization and urbanization which (Nirupama & D'Souza 2021) say have degraded the moral values of people and also suggest approach to inculcating ethics and values in the provision of value-based curriculum. In a similar vein, (Pfeil et. al. (2017) and John-Nelson et. al. (2025) advised that ethics and values need to be inherently integrated within schools and education system.

In the same vein, Ezeh and Onuh (2023) advocate the teaching of cultural and moral values such as respect for elders, show of hospitality, tolerance, cooperation, thoughtfulness among others, though Omenma and Onuoha (2021) saw little or no impact of the curriculum in changing children's practical value system and recommends the redesigning the culture and socialization curriculum content to be practical and problem solving in order to enhance the needed attitude, behaviour and positive change in children's behaviour.

Values and ethics education apply to all aspects of the process of education, which either explicitly or implicitly relate to ethical dimensions of life and are such that can be structured, guided and monitored with appropriate educational methods and tools (Pfeil et. al. 2017) and can be taught in the classroom (Arda Tuncdemir, Burroughs & Moore 2022).

Ethics education is a process of communication as stated by Ryan & Bisson (2011) that aspires to develop new insights about social life and generate moral obligations. Ethics education and critical thinking have a significant role (Pfeil et. al. 2017) in forming a mature, ethical human being, though remains challenging to effectively implement (Arda Tuncdemir, Burroughs & Moore 2022).

Implementing ethics and values education at the basic education level will not only promote a healthy school culture, but will also educate students on the skills and values to address moral challenges in life. The ethical regeneration of the society is not a discovery of a new ethics, Musek (2015) but rather it is more of a full accomplishment of the existing ethics. The most important facilitator of ethical re-engineering is the effective management of change (Sethi & Duffy 2003) particularly with respect to people. Education and training (Sethi & Duffy 2003) suggested are important aspects of the re-engineering process.

Enu&Esu (2011) recommended the re-engineering of values education in Nigerian schools as a catalyst for national development. However, Holbrook (2000) in Okorie (2023) pointed out that re-engineering Nigeria's educational system is a complex and multifaceted task that requires a comprehensive approach to address the deep-rooted issues that plague the system. Value re-engineering (Jibrin &Shakantu 2021) consider acritical analysis and radical redesign of existing processes to achieve breakthrough improvements in performance measures.

Re-engineering is the examination, study and eventual modification of the existing internal mechanism or functionality of an existing system in other to make it more effective, efficient, responsive and providing demonstrable value for the system and all stakeholders. (Okokoya&Abamba 2012).



The redesign process could be directed towards the teachers as they occupy a critical and sensitive position in the education industry. Teachers, Martins (2024) say deal with many situations in which values must be practiced therefore it is up to them to train good students. Teachers play an essential and strategic role in education (Dirsa, Anggreni, Diananseri&Setiawan 2022). They not only carry out the function of transferring knowledge but also function to inculcate values and sustain character-building in students as they play a pivotal role in achieving values education (Mohamad &Sihe 2019, Baig & Begun 2023, Oeschger, Makarova, Daniel &Doring 2024). Teachers are role models (Pradha 2016, Gul 2017, Ahuja, Mali and Nazkani 2020) and have been found to attach importance to such values as respect (Thornberg and Oguz 2013, Martins 2024) and have expressed that such values be integrated into teaching and normally developed in the curriculum where such practices could be implemented in the classroom (Arda Tuncdemir et. al. 2022).

The teachers' role in inculcating values and ethics is a highly contested one in contemporary education (Pantic& Wubbels 2012), though majority of these teachers (Kader & Daniel 2024) have a positive attitude towards teaching value education, and feel comfortable, satisfied, and confident in doing so. The implication of this is that the journey to national development begins in the classroom with teachers who are able and willing. The job of the teacher has multiplier effect and affects posterity.

Just like teachers, parents do have a unique and pivotal role in shaping the lives of children. The family serves as the first school where the beliefs, attitudes and behaviours are shaped. The family (Sapturi&Marzuki 2021, Walidaini and Marzuki 2021, Feri and Sutrisno 2022, Vertal, Korolenko, Shapovalova and Bereziuk 2024) say is where children develop their many identities and beliefs about right and wrong before entering formal school. Every parent has a way of imparting morals to their child and values learnt at an early age will be difficult to be forgotten. As the first educational environment (Valavi, Harouni and Moghadam 2022) they occupy a privileged position in their children's life as they interact more with them.

Parents do realize (Tay & Yildirim2009) that the main responsibility of giving values education belongs to them and second to the school. However, contemporary society with its many distractions poses a little distraction to parents thereby not allowing them as much time as they would have desired with their children. As parents spend less time with these children, the values are declining as they have not been taught properly.

The teaching of values in school will help develop and reinforce desirable habits such as honesty, truthfulness, tolerance, compassion and trustworthiness. Values can be taught through modelling by the teachers, role playing, field trips and metacognition (Ukpabio, Ekere, & Nnaji 2023).

Statement of the problem

Values are important, deep-rooted, pervasive and lasting beliefs, attitudes, ideals, and attachments which are usually shared by the members of a given community and concern what is good or bad (Pfeil et. al, 2017). The decay in the Nigerian society has affected the standard of values and moral character formation (Enu&Esu, 2011). Nigeria is currently experiencing value crisis starting from the family to the national level. This trend needs to be reversed. There is a feeling of dissatisfaction with the way we have educated our youth from the home as well as in the school. Nurturing students' attitudes should be an integral part of the education system. The core of a nation's educational system should be the provision of high-quality, comprehensive education essential for inculcating values and ethics.

Previous research on values education has focused mainly on the need for values education in schools (Nirupama & D' Souza 2021). Several studies on the perception of teachers on values education in schools (Sahin, 2019). Other studies have focused on the strategies for values re-orientation, however minimal research has focused on values re-engineering for sustainable development. With the current situation of almost near decay of values and ethics in the society, one wonders how best we can restore our values for a sustainable national development. This study therefore sought to establish what needs to be done to re-engineer ethics and values education to achieve sustainable national development.

Purpose of the Study

The study ascertained what needs to be done to re-engineer ethics and values education for sustainable national development. More specifically, is explored;

1. Whether teachers will differ in their perception of what needs to be done in the home to re-engineer ethics and values education for sustainable national development.
2. If teachers will differ in their perception of what needs to be done at school to re-engineer ethics and values education for sustainable national development.

Research Questions

The research questions directing the study include the following.

1. Will teachers differ in their perception of what needs to be done at home to re-engineer ethics and values education for sustainable national development?
2. Will teachers differ in their perception of what needs to be done at school to re-engineer ethics and values education for sustainable national development?

Research Method

This descriptive study examined what needs to be done at the basic education level to re-engineer ethics and values education for sustainable national development. More specifically, it explored the perception of teachers at the basic education level of Enugu East Local Government area on what needs to be done to re-engineer ethics and values education for sustainable national development. The population for the study was the 525 teachers, (49 males and 476 females) in basic schools in Enugu North Local Government Area. The population also served as the sample since the number was manageable. Data was collected using a 19- item structured questionnaire titled “What Needs to be done to Re-engineer Ethics and Values Education for Sustainable National Development Questionnaire (WNREVESNDQ)”. The instrument was validated by three experts, two from the Department of Educational Management and one from the Measurement and Evaluation unit of Mathematics and Computer Department, all from the Enugu State University of Science and Technology, (ESUT), Agbani, Enugu State, Nigeria. The internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach’s Alpha, and it has a very high estimate consistency of content of 0.89. The instrument was distributed with the help of four research assistants. Of the 525 copies of the questionnaire distributed 493 copies were successfully retrieved giving a 93.9% return rate. The data collected were analyzed using percentages and mean with standard deviation.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The data is analyzed and presented using percentage (%), mean and standard deviation as follows:

Table 1: Teachers’ Demographics.

Variables	Frequencies	Percentage
Gender		
Male	49	9.33
Female	476	90.67
Location of School		
Urban	350	66.66
Rural	175	33.33
Age		
30-40	118	22.47
41-50	320	60.95
51-60	87	16.57

N = 525 teachers.

Table 2: Percentage Representation of questionnaires return by teachers according to gender

S/N	Gender	Distributed	Retrieved	% Retrieved	% Not Retrieved	Over All %
1	Male	49	44	89.80	10.20	8.93
2	Female	476	449	91.08	8.92	91.07
	Total	525	493	93.91	6.09	100.00

Table 3: Percentage Representation of questionnaires return according based on school location

S/N	Location	Distributed	Retrieved	% Retrieved	% Not Retrieved	Over All %
1	Urban	350	327	93.43	6.57	66.33
2	Rural	175	166	94.86	5.14	33.67
	Total	525	493	93.91	6.09	100.00

Table 4: Percentage Representation of questionnaire return based on age

S/N	Age Bracket (years)	Distributed	Retrieved	% Retrieved	% Not Retrieved	Over All %
1	30-40	118	110	93.22	6.78	22.31
2	41-50	320	300	93.75	6.25	60.85
3	51-60	87	83	95.40	4.60	16.84
	Total	525	493	93.91	6.09	100.00

Table 5: Mean responses of teachers on what needs to be done at home to re-engineer ethics and values education for sustainable national development

S/N	Ethics and values education can be re-engineered by parents:	M Mean	SD	F mean	SD	Average Mean	SD	Dec
1	Instilling values at home	3.43	0.79	3.50	0.55	3.47	0.67	A
2	Acting as role models	3.00	0.58	3.00	1.10	3.00	0.84	A
3	Beginning re-orientation from the home	2.50	0.67	2.63	0.59	2.57	0.63	A
4	Giving full support to school to discipline their wards	2.57	0.98	2.67	1.03	2.62	1.01	A
5	Spending more quality time with their children	3.29	0.76	3.17	0.98	2.56	0.87	A
6	Teaching children the tenets of relating with people	2.29	1.11	2.43	1.17	2.36	1.14	D
7	Regulation what is viewed on TV	3.14	0.90	3.33	0.82	3.24	0.86	A
8	Involving children in community activities	2.71	0.76	3.33	0.82	3.02	0.79	A
9	Exhibiting those values	2.57	0.54	3.00	0.63	2.79	0.59	A
	Grand Mean	2.55	0.71	2.71	0.77	2.63	0.74	A

Table 5 shows the responses of male and female teachers at the basic education level on what needs to be done at home by parents to re-engineer ethics and values education. With means above 2.50, the teachers agreed that all the items were what needs to be done for ethics and values re-engineering at home except item 6 with a mean of 2.29.

Table 6: Mean responses of teachers on what needs to be done at school to re-engineer ethics and values education for sustainable national development

S/N	Ethics and values education can be re-engineered in the school by:	M Mean	SD	F Mean	SD	Average Mean	SD	Dec
1	Teachers showing good example by their form of expression	2.89	1.05	2.92	1.04	2.91	1.05	A
2	Showing proper models of behaviour	2.56	1.33	2.54	1.05	2.55	1.19	A
3	Teachers dressing decently	2.78	1.30	3.00	1.00	2.89	1.15	A

4	Allowing teachers to instill discipline appropriately	2.67	1.32	2.50	.97	2.59	1.15	A
5	Making values education a compulsory subject for all classes	3.11	1.05	2.69	1.11	2.90	1.08	A
6	Teachers handling students in a humanely way	3.33	1.11	3.31	1.18	2.82	1.15	A
7	Ensuring children are dressed properly at school	2.54	1.13	3.00	1.00	2.72	1.07	A
8	Instilling good classroom behaviour	3.11	0.93	2.50	1.20	2.81	1.07	A
9	Teachers being punctual to class	2.67	1.11	3.00	1.00	2.84	1.06	A
10	Organizing programmes that teach these values	3.00	0.87	2.62	1.19	2.81	1.03	A
	Grand Mean	2.87	1.12	2.81	1.07	2.84	1.09	A

Table 6 shows what needs to be done in school to re-engineer ethics and values education for sustainable national development. With mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, both male and female teachers agreed that all the items listed needs to be done in order to re-engineer ethics and values education for sustainable national development.

Discussion of Findings

Findings from this study indicate that majority of the teachers are female (90.67%) while the males were in the minority (9.33%). Majority of the teachers (66.67%) were teaching in schools located in the urban areas and most of the teachers were within the age bracket of 41-50 years. Regarding what needs to be done at home to re-engineer ethics and values education for a sustainable national development both the male and female teachers agreed with all the items except one. Some of these items include; parents acting as role models, instilling discipline right from the home, allowing the school to discipline the children, involving children in community activities while they disagreed with teaching children the tenets of relating with people. This result is in consonance with the studies of Oeschger et. al. 2024. The teaching of values from an early age according to (Pfeil, Underwood, Curko, Feiner, Pokorny, Sola, Linares, Arenas, Kragic&Strahonik 2017) is of paramount importance as the home forms the first social environment that a child encounters. Aside this, children tend to value what their parents tell them and try to practice such and the Holy book admonishes us to teach a child the way to go so that when he grows up, he does not depart from it. This corroborates Obijekwu and Obiesili (2022) who maintained that every citizen must imbibe the culture of moral value thereby recognizing that “society as a sui generi is real only to the extent to which the members are instructed and guided by their value system” particularly, the family. Therefore, if children are taught the right ethics and values starting from the home, it will form part of their behaviour which they will exhibit when they grow up. Surprisingly teachers did not agree that teaching children the tenets of relating with people is a way to re-engineer ethics and values education. Concerning the aspect that parents teaching children the tenets of relating with people which was rejected, this could be attributed to the modern parenting style where parents do not care much about human relations. This aligns with John-Nelson, Ihunwo&Ohanyiri (2025) who asserted that there is a break- down of family structure due to individualistic tendencies exhibited in homes due principally to economic situation in the country. The dynamics of human relationship needs to be learnt early so that the journey of associating with fellow citizens and building up a nation does not become second place. It is in relating with people that some values like respect is learnt.

Re-engineering ethics and values education in the school is just a natural way of continuing what began at home as teachers are regarded as “in loco parentis”. Teachers agreed that ethics and values education can be re-engineered in school as LongJohn (2023) suggests it be included in the curricula. On teaching values education in schools (Ezeh and Onuh 2023, Ryan and Bisson 2011, Arda Tuncdemiret. al 2022, and Ihunwo et. al. 2025) advocate and support it as teachers deal with many situations in which values must be practiced. Trevino & Gonzalez (2000) posit that at the beginning of

compulsory schooling, it will be necessary to encourage the sense of values reflected in the forms of behaviour. Also corroborating this, the Association of Private Educators in Nigeria (APEN; 2024), asserted that schools have to make a deliberate effort to integrate ethical intelligence and moral values into their curriculum. However, Ikpa & Bethel- Eke (2023) and Ommenma & Onuoha (2021) differ as they observed that moral regeneration of Nigerian youths is not to be hinged solely and wholly on formal pedagogy.

Conclusion

The goal of this study was to explore what needs to be done to re-engineer ethics and values education for sustainable national development as perceived by teachers in basic education schools. Results showed that the demography, school location nor the age of the teachers affected their responses. Hence this study confirms that all teachers agree that the re-engineering of ethics and values education for sustainable national development can be done through the home and school. This goes to buttress the fact that both the home and school have a lot of work to do in this regard and need to sit up.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the following are recommended

1. An over haul of the education system to reflect the teaching of our values.
2. Establishing reward systems to encourage behaviours reflecting good values so as to encourage more of such.
3. The use of disciplinary measures that will have a turn around effect on children without necessarily dehumanizing them.

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